Extended Book Review: Syndicalism and the 'transnational turn'

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Dave Berry and Constance Bantman (eds)

New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour and Syndicalism: the Individual, the National and the Transnational **Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010; xi+228 pp.**

Hardback, £39.99 ISBN 97811443823937

Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt

Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940: The Praxis of National Liberation, Internationalism, and Social Revolution. **Leiden: Brill, 2010; lxxiv+434 pp.**

Hardback €124 ISBN 9789004188495; Paperback €48 ISBN 9789004250550

Constance Bantman

The French Anarchists in London, 1880–1914. Exile and Transnationalism in the First Globalisation **[Studies in Labour History, 1] Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013; xii+219 pp.; Hardback £75 ISBN 9781846318801; E-book £75 ISBN 9781781386583**

Kevin Morgan

Bolshevism, syndicalism and the general strike: The lost internationalist world of A.A. Purcell **(Part 3: *Bolshevism and the British Left*). Lawrence and Wishart, 2013, 354 pp. ; Paperback £25 ISBN 9781905007271**

Constance Bantman and Bert Altena (eds)

Reassessing the Transnational Turn: Scales of Analysis in Anarchist and Syndicalist Studies **(New York: Routledge, 2015) xi+240 pp.; Hardback £90 ISBN 9781138797208**

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I

It has become something of a cliché to observe the remarkable explosion of renewed

academic interest in syndicalism in recent years. The British 'baby boomers' sought inspiration and understanding from early twentieth-century syndicalist movements in the context of increasing industrial militancy and rank-and-file activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s. This time round, as Constance Bantman and Dave Berry argue in their superb introduction to *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour and Syndicalism*, the context is truly global. They point firstly to the recent emergence of the 'alter-globalisation' movement that borrowed 'many of its direct-action tactics from pre-World War I anarchism and syndicalism' (p.1). Second, is a rekindled public interest in anarchist terrorism sparked by increasingly sophisticated and active international terrorist networks. The 'transnational turn' in labour history has spawned new comparative methodologies with which to analyse the emergence of syndicalism and 'the first modern globalisation' (p.11). Specifically, considerable attention has been directed towards the mapping of personal networks. Also essential is historical biography as it is particularly well tailored to scrutinise activists operating in more informal as well as formal organisations; especially important as syndicalism relied 'on prominent activists and a tight organisational network' (p.9).

The book's ten chapters thus explore the 'international cross-influences, personal connections [⋯] and the role of informal ties through travel, journalism or the translation of theoretical works' (pp.4–5). It opens with Wayne Thorpe's study of the 'uneasy family' of European syndicalists before the Great War, focussing on the French CGT's (Confederation Generale du Travail, the largest syndicalist organisation) exemplar role and the similarities and differences, the harmonies and conflicts that emerge in any family; perhaps most importantly the collective syndicalist failure to formulate an effective anti-war international policy. Carl Levy and Constance Bantman offer tasters of what were then forthcoming books in their studies of Malatesta and the impact of the British experience and ideas in the formation of the CGT (on which, more below), while Yann Beliard provides a telling portrait of how a German cabinetmaker, Gustav Adolf Schmidt, became Gus Smith, whose name is still known (and indeed claimed by contemporary

anarchists) in Hull, where he was active for various causes. Though never calling himself a syndicalist, the un-sectarian Smith's example was of an 'integration' that, far from connoting 'subordination, capitulation and corruption', offered 'a more complex, and nobler, sense of the word' (p.60).

There follow post-1918 studies of anarcho-syndicalism in interwar Upper Silesia (Dieter Nelles), an account of the Spanish CNT leader Angel Pestana's 'Mission Impossible' in Bolshevik Russia (Reiner Tosstorff) and discussion of post-Second world War French anarchists and the CGT-FO (Guillaume Davranche). Rafal Chwedoruk offers a fascinating study of Polish anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism during the twentieth century, although the ambition of its chronological scope necessarily means that there are only fleeting references to, say, the role of punk in the 1980s. Finally, Bert Altena provides a critical note, offering an incisive engagement with the bulk of the most significant extant literature on syndicalism. Using a detailed comparative study of two adjoining Dutch towns, Altena makes an interesting –but not entirely convincing– argument for the significance of place, and particularly the social and cultural relationships between the classes, in explaining where and why syndicalism prospered. Overall this collection is stimulating and valuable, but it nevertheless could have done with one or two more pieces like Altena's; it seems rather lonely by itself under the book's fourth subdivision 'Interpretations'. A second criticism, pre-empted by the editors themselves, is the collection's rather Euro-centric focus, which they ascribe to 'yet another case of researchers being "the complacent victims of [their] own networks and locations"' (pp.6–7).

II

This particular issue was addressed by co-editors Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt in their enlightening *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940*, also published in 2010. In an incisive introduction the editors also showcased transnational approaches, their book focussing particularly on supranational connections and multidirectional flows. They are critical of Eurocentric approaches

(particularly 'the Spanish fixation'), wherein syndicalist and anarchist movements in colonial and postcolonial contexts are regarded as simply imitations or extensions of their European counterparts. The book therefore explores a wide variety of contexts across the globe where syndicalist and anarchist ideas and movements took root, drawing on the work of pioneering authorities, as well as on that of younger researchers. Among the former are Benedict Anderson who supplies the book's entertaining and provocative foreword and Arif Dirlik (China). The substantive chapters are divided into two sections; the colonial world and postcolonial world. In practice this means part two covers exclusively the Latin American contexts, while countries in Asia, Africa and Europe are dealt with in part one. As the book's chronological focus encompasses the rise of syndicalist and anarchist movements and the peak of global imperialism and colonialism, a major theme is to explain how the former grappled with colonialism, national liberation, imperialism, state formation, and social revolution, assessing the extent to which they were able to break away from imperialism and racism from within labour movements. Nationalism certainly posed challenges: Benedict Anderson notes that anarchism had to deal with nationalism which it did 'not wholly comprehend, and had some good reasons to suspect' (p.xxiv), though alliances could nevertheless be forged.

The precise dynamics of these processes varied considerably. Anthony Gorman's chapter on Egypt offers an intriguing case study whereby immigrant activists of various nationalities formed syndicalist organisations that began to grow in the early twentieth century. The revolutionary movement developed its own polyglot means of communication, going to remarkable lengths to overcome language barriers through extensive translation and multi-lingual meetings. The anarchists were also prepared to support nationalist (or at least anti-colonialist) ventures under certain specific circumstances. As Dongyoun Hwang shows, the issues for the emergent (indigenous) Korean movement were rather different. There, the struggle against a vicious Japanese colonial rule was the single most important driving force of the movement. Similarly, Dirlik reveals that some anarchists and syndicalists supported nationalism to throw off the imperial yoke and act as a necessary stepping stone towards a future anarchist society. In Cuba, as Kirk Shaffer demonstrates, the situation was different again: many anarchists refused to support independence

as it acted as a distraction from the workers' struggle and, if victorious, would simply change the identities of the oppressors. Lucien van der Walt's discussion of South Africa offers yet another contrasting context, as he challenges 'Communist School' (Marxist) historiography. Van der Walt shows that ethnic (and gender) equality were central to the politics of South African syndicalists and anarchists who struggled to appeal to the white working-class, most of whom were organised in white-only unions. Instead, successes came among the workers of African or Indian extraction, as the syndicalists and anarchists, like their counterparts in Egypt, on occasion cooperated with nationalists (though they rejected nationalism itself).

The coverage of mass anarchist movements in 'post-colonial' Latin America is equally enthralling. In Argentina (Geoffroy de Laforcade), there existed an anarcho-syndicalist union of 250,000 organising mass strikes and providing for the cultural and educational needs of its members. The Brazilian (Edilene Toledo and Luigi Biondi) experience was similar, with anarcho-syndicalist unions fighting for the eight-hour day and later (1917–19) leading insurrectionary general strikes. Peruvian anarcho-syndicalists (Steven Hirsch) similarly organised mass general strikes (1918–19) facilitated self-education and promoted cultural and sporting activities, becoming dominant in the labour movement.

Back in the 'colonial' world, Aleksandr Shubin reminds us of the significance of the Makhnovist movement in the southern Ukraine, where the anarchist peasant army harnessed popular desires for self-determination to a programme of workers' and peasants' control, using cooperatives and popular local councils. In Ireland, Emmet O'Connor shows what a crucial role leading syndicalists James Connolly and Jim Larkin played in the Irish national struggle. Again, the years from 1918 were particularly turbulent, with mass industrial action successfully brought to bear on the urgent political questions of the day. Overall, the collection represents an impressive effort to undermine Eurocentrism, defined by the notion of 'Spanish exceptionalism', offering a fascinating and accessible text effectively addressing a yawning gap in the historiography.

III

The promise suggested by these two edited collections is borne out in Constance Bantman's admirable full-length study of the *French Anarchists in London* (2013). Bantman focuses on the five-hundred odd French anarchists exiled in London in the 1880s and early 1890s, their numbers augmenting as 'propaganda by the deed' was in its notorious heyday. In doing this, Bantman makes effective use of a wide range of primary sources from several major archives, as well as numerous anarchist and mainstream newspapers, journals and periodicals. A concise introduction effectively exploring the key historiographical debates is followed by six substantive chapters. The first provides an excellent overview of the necessary context, offering an assessment of the origins and trajectories of the British and French anarchist movements from the 1870s, while the following chapter gets into the core of Bantman's material; it offers a sociological discussion of who the French exiles were, where they lived and worked, their clubs and other manifestations of their associational culture. Integration varied; many French disliked the British climate, as well as (naturally!), the cuisine, and anti-British stereotypes prevailed. Notable exceptions included 'genuine Anglophile' Louise Michel (p.79).

Chapter three explores how the exiles did their politics –forms of activism, the crucial role played by print propaganda– while the fourth chapter focuses on anarchist terrorism. The London French anarchist exiles were one of the main suspect groups in the 1890s but, Bantman argues, police spies' obsession with this form of 'propaganda by the deed' branded the exiles with a notoriety that belied their general disinclination to bomb. In terms of the State's response, however, the myths mattered more, and, as chapter five shows, the case of a small number of anarchists played a significant role in debates about asylum and immigration, that, combined with fears stirred up by the mass immigration from Eastern Europe after the post-1881 Russian pogroms, eventually resulted in the 1905 Aliens Act. The parallels with contemporary public discourse and concerns are clear.

The final chapters are the most directly relevant to this review. Chapter six deals with the ramifications of the French exilic experience for the emergence and development of syndicalism from the mid-1890s. Bantman argues for the central role played by the

Franco-British relationship through the often small but nevertheless significant personal networks developed in exile. This fruitful, two-way relationship continued until the First World War, and suggests a far more important, and constructive legacy for the French anarchist exiles than that of the stereotypical 'dynamitard'. As important, Bantman advocates a new understanding of supposed British labour movement 'conservatism', when interpreted through the eyes of French militants. She shows how trade union struggles in Britain offered examples from which proto-syndicalist ideology could draw, with leading French activists like Emile Pouget particularly significant in the debate. Bantman argues that the CGT's Amiens Charter of 1906, a famous statement of syndicalist direct action and rejection of the 'political' route, owed much to observation of the 'British leopard'. Equally influential were specific British trade unionist practices, such as the go-slow, that Pouget advocated in his pamphlet *Sabotage*. By 1912 activists in an increasingly divided CGT were beginning to regard the practice of British trade unions and militants as 'a source of possible reinvigoration for the CGT in crisis' (p.207).

Finally, Bantman turns to the anti-war activism of the cross-Channel syndicalist networks. She argues that the movement was deeply internationalist, drawing from networks formed in the 1890s. But there were significant problems –evident at national and international levels– inherent in turning 'good intentions' into effective organisation (p.214). Bantman makes much of the 'libertarian dilemma' that bedevilled repeated attempts to establish a formal international syndicalist coordinating organisation, epitomised by the confusion of the London syndicalist congress of 1913– though she adds that 'the very efficient work of liaison carried out by the syndicalist press and certain individuals suggests that, at this stage, informal links were more efficient vehicles for the international circulation of ideas and strategies' (p.216). In the end, neither could prevent the syndicalist debacle in the face of actual war. As the smoke of war cleared, the syndicalist/anarchist (largely informal) internationalist world of pre-August 1914 also lay in smouldering ruins.

In the conclusion, Bantman considers the connections that the network-based pre-war

movements have with the contemporary alter globalization movement, arguing that both represented the anti-hegemonic manifestation of a process of 'dual globalization'; a transnational movement opposing capitalist, State-led globalisation, positing a radical alternative agenda, and deploying new means of communication to improve organisation and impact; that there is a 'red thread between nineteenth-century international socialism and contemporary calls for a fairer globalization' (p.224). While this final claim could have been explored more fully, as a whole this is a thoroughly researched and stimulating book that certainly satisfies Bantman's self-professed aim of contributing to a map of transnational anarchism and syndicalism (p.11). The book itself is attractively presented and contains some great images. It is also concise; if anything, a little too concise; there could easily have quite a lot more of it, offering greater attention, for example, to debates in anarchist circles over how to organise, and the problems of accountability and openness associated with organising through personal networks rather than more formal structures.

IV

The indigenous British relationship to syndicalism and its longer-term implications for left politics after the Bolsheviks came to power are fruitfully explored in *Bolshevism, syndicalism and the general strike*. Kevin Morgan uses the activism of Alf Purcell (1872-1935) as a lens through which to examine developing internationalism within British trade unionism, and particularly the attitudes of left/militant trade unionists to the nascent Soviet Union. Purcell was a significant figure in both the industrial and political wings of the labour movement. He was a furnishing trades union official and nominal syndicalist and contact of Tom Mann and became a leading figure in the Furniture and Furnishing Guild (inspired by guild socialism). By the early post-war period, Purcell was a leading member of the Trades Union Congress, and also served as President of the International Federation of Trade Unions. Politically, Purcell was emblematic of a specific Labour identity in the flux of the early post-war world. Inspired by the Bolshevik revolution, Purcell moved the resolution that established the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920, yet he was also twice a Labour MP (for the Forest of Dean and Coventry). The most interesting and illuminating sections of *Bolshevism, syndicalism and the general*

strike deal with the latter stages of Purcell's career, particularly his role in trade union delegations to Russia and his response to growing claims of Bolshevik-led repression of their political opponents. Morgan writes lucidly and entertainingly about Purcell's complex and obstructive role to efforts by anarchist Emma Goldman to publicise allegations of Bolshevik repression in lecture tours around Britain (1924–1925). There are some fascinating insights into the culture of the far left at this time; British anarchists seemed to have as little idea of what to make of Goldman as the rest of the left. Morgan's depiction of the abrasive relations Goldman maintained with British anarchists as symptomatic of a wider clash between the cultural individualism of the US and British left culture determined much more by collectivism is compelling, and, indeed, still evident. Poor old Purcell found himself in the invidious position of having his name on an official trade union Russian delegation report as well as being one of its critics; small wonder, then, that Goldman denounced him as 'that damn fake'.

In terms of the focus of this review, the most important discussion of syndicalism comes when, paradoxically, it played no actual concrete role at all. As a long-term TUC General Council member, Purcell chaired the 1926 general strike committee. Here, in theory, was his chance to deploy key elements of his syndicalist training, and, indeed, many existing interpretations of this episode have depicted it as the syndicalists' ill-fated 'last hurrah'. Morgan provides an excellent discussion of the general strike's place in syndicalist theory and argues that, in spite of his standing and formal position, Purcell and his ideas played no part in how the 1926 General Strike was conceived and executed. Rather, it was wholly the brainchild of transport workers' leader Ernest Bevin, who imposed a centralised top-down strategy that proved disastrous in terms of the strike's prospects for success. Bevin's approach easily allowed the TUC leaders to engineer the ignominious climb-down on the ninth day, leaving the miners to struggle on alone to eventual bitter defeat. (An actual British anarcho-syndicalist, Tyneside activist Tom Brown, made this basic case in a brilliant propaganda pamphlet on the 1926 general strike several decades ago). In the aftermath of defeat, Purcell, now fifty-four, was edged

out of influence, in a process of Labour Party polarisation that was eliminating 'non-party communism' in the later 1920s. Rigorously researched and insightful, *Bolshevism, syndicalism and the general strike* demonstrates very well the considerable benefits of focussing on the life of a networked, inter-connected activist as a conduit for ground-breaking exploration.

V

While Morgan's work is not explicitly anchored in the 'transnational turn' literature around syndicalism and anarchism, it nevertheless speaks to many of the same themes in similar ways (though Purcell's 'transnationalism' took the form of the apparently now less fashionable institutional internationalism). Our final text in this review, *Reassessing the Transnational Turn* (2015) is, as its title suggests, located very much in the paradigm. A collection edited by Constance Bantman and Bert Altena, it effectively reasserts the case for the significance of transnational approaches (particularly in relation to networks), but it also offers insightful explorations of national, local and individual levels/aspects, and the interplay between them. In terms of the national (state), Bantman and Altena remark in their useful introduction that the book's context suggests that 'the importance of the state may have been dispensed with too quickly by anarchist scholars' (p.8); perhaps rather apt, in that syndicalist theory was also accused of simply ignoring the state. Accordingly, the first of the book's three substantive sections –the introduction is awarded its own 'section'– deals with anarchist theoretical engagements with the state, the nation and nationalism. Davide Turcato's chapter offers the Italians as a case study of anarchist movement practice in relation to the nation. Turcato argues that anarchists could adopt various identities (national, group or others), nurturing them and an ideal of universal cooperation without being inconsistent. He claims that the nation's bad reputation comes from its association with the state and that the historian should use a hyphen for 'nation-state', rendering the two concepts separable; anarchists fought against states, not nations. Discussing Kropotkin's theory of the state, Ruth Kinna argues that his call for the defeat of Prussian militarism was due to the potential he saw for this to

ignite anti-statist action across Europe; his claim that Prussian militarism represented the greater threat 'reflected his understanding of the development of Statism in Europe rather than a concealed nationalist sentiment' (p.58). Next is Bert Altena's study of networked anarchist historian Max Nettlau whose 'almost prosophographical' examination of networks prefigured the 'transnational turn' literature. Nettlau also 'reminds us that one does not have to migrate to engage in transnational activities' (p.76).

The second section is more practical in its focus, examining anarchists and their movements in relation to the transnational, national and local. Specifically, Isabelle Felici assesses (generally well-known) anarchists' views on migration; exploring the extent to which immigration helped anarchists overcome feelings of national belonging and enact the anarchist ideal of abolishing borders. Kenyon Zimmer, describing the complex and fascinating anarchist networks of the nodal city of San Francisco, invites historians to be the 'bastards of national historiographies' (p.114), while Pietro di Paola's focus points to a peculiarly insular Italian anarchist transnationalism. Mobility (both compulsory and voluntary) is the watchword in these contributions, but Raymond Craib's 'sedentary' anarchists are different. Craib deploys the term 'sedentary' 'as a means, on the one hand, to emphasise "place" and, on the other hand, to escape the politically and epistemologically inadequate categories deployed by (and derivative of) the nation-state' (p.141). To explore this concept, Craib skilfully uses the biography of Casimiro Barrios, a Spaniard emigre in Santiago, Chile. For Craib's purposes –illustrating the activities of an emigre who becomes firmly settled in his host country– Barrios is peculiarly apt, his surname translating as 'neighbourhoods'.

The final section examines the often rather disturbing role of nationalism (and localities) among anarchists. Nino Kuhnis explores the Swiss anarchist movement through its own press, arguing that the 'national' and anarchism are not strictly dichotomous and that ignoring the 'national' entirely would be neglecting a defining element of the anarchist movement's identity (p.168). This theme takes a darker turn in Constance Bantman

and Martin Baxmeyer's chapters. Bantman explores attitudes that could run counter to transnationalism through a prosophographical study of four prominent anarchists linked with the French movement. She finds that transnational and internationalist impulses were intertwined with counter-tendencies including strong national or even nationalist outlooks and even brushes with anti-Semitism (though this was not specific to French anarchists and became more marginalised in the twentieth-century) (p.175). Bantman warns against assumptions of 'uncompromising ideological purity over such divisive issues' (p.188). Finally, Baxmeyer addresses anarchist literature in the 1936–39 Spanish Civil War, identifying a profound 'nationalist shift' in the literary self-representation within the anarchist movement; as, in emulating Francoist literature, it used the same tropes –even religion– to adopt nationalist, colonialist and even racist concepts in constructing its national myth of "the eternal Spain of anarchy" (p.195). Alarmingly, Baxmeyer suggests that part of the explanation was a long-standing minority within the anarchist movement itself that held nationalist ideas, evident in their self-image of superiority to the rest of international anarchist movement (pp.204–5). Overall *Reassessing the Transnational Turn* offers a rich and stimulating collection of cutting edge research, and represents a very worthwhile addition to the burgeoning literature in this area.

VI

The recent efflorescence of work on syndicalism and anarchism (mostly under the rubric of the 'transnational turn') has been remarkable and very welcome. There can be traced, too, a clear development in approaches as its practitioners have become more attentive to the need to explore and adopt appropriate scales of analysis in their research, and, to some extent, more critical of the 'transnational turn' itself. Nevertheless, there remain areas that are still inadequately explored or underappreciated and, indeed, certain ways in which the 'transnational turn', for all the excellent work it has inspired, can still limit rather than liberate.

In terms of the former, the ideological makeup of syndicalism receives an often inadequate treatment. In much of the work reviewed, syndicalism and anarchism are taken as almost (or entirely) interchangeable terms, without comment. Elsewhere, the two are

explicitly taken as broadly synonymous. Thus, Wayne Thorpe, for example, offers (apparent) endorsement for van der Walt and Schmidt's argument that 'anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary syndicalism, used as descriptive typologies, are best understood as nearly identical movements falling under the canopy of the "broad anarchist tradition"' (Thorpe 2010 p.17). Altena's (2010) disagreement with van der Walt on this question seems only to be about the individual anarchists who are *not* included in van der Walt's 'broad anarchist tradition' (rather than the Marxists he does include).

In many contexts, the conflation is understandable, as Marxists played little or no theoretical or practical part in syndicalist movements. In others, however, conflating syndicalism and anarchism (and industrial unionism) confuses rather than clarifies. This is evident when van der Walt himself raises this argument in his 2010 chapter, writing that the Socialist Labour Party '[o]ften misunderstood as a "Marxist" organization [⋯] was a syndicalist group following the doctrines of Daniel de Leon, the American IWW leader' (p.58). It is simply disingenuous to suggest that de Leon was some kind of unconscious anarchist not least as he (famously) drew his politics from the writings of Marx and Engels and spent an inordinate amount of time saying rather unpleasant things about anarchism and anarchists (albeit, incidentally, also conflating syndicalism and anarchism; SLP activists favoured the term 'industrial unionism' for the industrial element of their programme). The IWW de Leon ended up leading was the rump Detroit organisation, the result of a split that his party's failure to keep the IWW committed to a political strategy precipitated. Claiming de Leon and his grouping fell under a 'broad anarchist tradition' only obscures the reasons for this damaging split and does an injustice to the ideological complexities of syndicalism, which were also evident elsewhere.

In Britain, for example, many leading activists of different persuasions used Engels' work, particularly, to theorise and practice syndicalism; branding them 'unconscious' anarchists is effectively accusing them of a form of false consciousness, ironically enough something many Marxists were prone to doing to their political opponents. Ultimately,

it does not matter where we think activists' ideas *should* come from; we need to look at where they actually *do* come from and why. No matter how authoritarian Marx and Engels and their ideas were, what is remarkable is that, in the hands of some –in the British context, for example, the grouping of Marxist auto-didacts around *The Miners' Next Step* including Noah Ablett and W.F. Hay– they were theorised to find positions that rendered them in some cases *almost* indistinguishable from those of anarchists (and, indeed, fully formed anarchists *could* emerge from exposure to such ideas). In the literature on British syndicalism, however, the opposite problem often exists, as the (admittedly minoritarian, but often indigenous) anarchist input (and output) of syndicalism –remarked on by John Quail in the 1970s– largely goes uncommented. A particular strength of Bantman's work is to point to syndicalist ideas among anarchists that predated the emergence of the de Leonite SLP in Britain.

Overall, then, it is clear that theoretically speaking syndicalism owed much more to anarchism than Marxism, and that in many (non-English speaking) contexts anarchism was the fully dominant ideology. Nevertheless, syndicalism still cannot be reduced to an approach within anarchism in all cases. Consequently, it seems more useful to regard syndicalism as an arena where the theoretical and applied aspects of anarchism and Marxism could overlap, come together as well as clash, and out of which could emerge exciting new formations (a view that chimes rather nicely with the February 2016 edition of *Capital and Class*). Conceptualising syndicalism this way allows for understandings of how Marxist writings and theory could lead, through some forms of syndicalism, to the adoption of anarchism, as well as to positions that were practically indistinguishable from anarchism without being directly (theoretically) informed by anarchism. In short, the fluidity on the revolutionary left, the points where forms of libertarian Marxism and anarchism overlapped in syndicalism, was historically significant and offers rich and fascinating lines of enquiry that straight-forwardly conflating syndicalism with anarchism precludes. In this sense Beliard's nuanced exploration of the subtleties of relations between revolutionary politics and social democracy is instructive.

There is a question, too, of the focus that the 'transnational turn' appears to demand: essentially on emigres and exilic communities of one sort or another. Even Craib's 'sedentary' anarchists were not born where they were active. This focus is, of course, understandable in that anarchists were subject to repression in most of the states in which they operated. Yet, in places like Britain, which –as the literature above so richly demonstrates, offered sanctuary to significant emigre anarchist populations from many parts of Europe– the indigenous anarchist who does not stray especially far from their birth place is almost entirely disregarded. There is an implied sense in the 'transnational turn' literature that the lives of these kinds of activists are simply not that interesting or important. This is potentially explicable; it seems reasonable to suggest that current researchers –many likely to have their own histories in global 'summit hopping' protests, now accustomed (almost certainly) to swift transnational communications in wide global networks and (very likely) to extensive global travel, and often emigres themselves (albeit not ordinarily from political necessity) – can find more inherent interest in the lives of 'transnational' activists of the past. But, again, in maintaining and privileging this focus, the 'transnational turn' literature marginalises activists who were capable, quite literally, of speaking to their fellow workers about revolutionary ideas in their own accents. The indigenous anarchists' very 'normalness' in their communities surely made them indispensable as revolutionary activists but it also –certainly in the case of a British political culture dominated by a peculiar form of social democracy– rendered them highly unusual and –with their lack of obvious transnational links– in need of explaining. It is at least a little discomfiting, too, that the 'transnational turn' research agenda sits rather easily with a contemporary Western libertarian left activist milieu that often seems to spend an awful lot more energy and effort in developing affinities with the oppressed of different cultures on the other side of the world than it does with the oppressed living down the road.

VII

While wary of identifying a teleogical 'forward march of syndicalism studies', it is clear that the literature since 2010 has built significantly on solid foundations. But there remains work to do, especially in terms of developing more critical approaches to the 'transnational turn' and on the ideological question of relations between anarchism and Marxism inside syndicalism. The revolutionary left of a hundred or more years ago is inspiring in some respects, depressingly familiar in others, but also strikingly different, too. In drawing the parallels we need to recognise the differences as well as the similarities between the 'first globalisation' and now, as well as the ideological baggage of one kind or another we invariably bring to the study of activists and ideas many of whom enjoyed their heyday before the Russian revolution. Academics working on anarchism in recent times have rightly made a strong case for the historical significance of an ideology that has been too readily misrepresented, misconstrued or simply ignored by generations of (often) Marxists. Yet it remains fundamental that we attempt at all times to understand syndicalism and syndicalists on their own terms, in their own contexts, rather than on ours. Totalising (and actually practically indemonstrable) claims made under the rubric of the 'transnational turn' are as problematic as those made under any other banner. Practically speaking, Bantman and Altena's (2015:14) call for future research in 'lesser known areas, searching for the "glocal" in small provincial towns, rural areas, or countries without a thriving anarchist movement, and, conversely, examining to what extent anarchist transnationalism was a predominantly urban and even metropolitan phenomenon' offers an excellent place to start.